

THORSTEN FÖGEN

Cassiodorus on the Role of Language and Culture in Divine and Secular Learning

Nec aliqua in mundo potest esse fortuna, quam litterarum non augeat gloriosa notitia. Accipite, quid maius generalitatis vota meruerunt. Princeps vester etiam ecclesiasticis est litteris eruditus.

(Cassiodorus, Var. 10.3.4–5)

Heia nunc, carissimi fratres, festinate in Scripturis sanctis proficere, quando me cognoscitis pro doctrinae vestrae copia adiutorio dominicae gratiae tanta vobis et talia congregasse.

(Cassiodorus, Inst. 1.33.4)

1. Introduction

Late antiquity, for the sake of convenience here very roughly defined as the time from the third until the sixth century A.D.,¹ is extremely rich in documents that exhibit an impressive array of reflexions on language and culture.² The best known and perhaps most influential figures within this period are Jerome (c. 347–419), Augustine (354–430), Boethius (c. 480–524), Cassiodorus (c. 485–c. 580), and Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636). In this period, reflexions on language occur in numerous different literary contexts: sermons, commentaries on the Bible, treatises on language occur in various disciplines, encyclopedias, letters, dialogues, and poetic works. This demonstrates that such considerations are by no means restricted to works of an instructional character; instead, they permeate a plethora of genres or text types, and this has an impact on how they are formulated. In some cases, language may be dealt with only in passing, while in other cases, it constitutes the main focus of a work. As

¹ On the term ‘late antiquity’ see e.g. Fuhrmann (1967), who addresses problems of continuity and periodisation. See also Inglebert (2012, esp. 3–7, 18–19), who rightly says that ‘it is inevitable that periodizations will vary according to the themes broached’ (2012, 5). With regard to Cassiodorus it should be added that his period has also been identified with the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages; see e.g. Steinhauf (2003, 132): ‘Wer sich über Cassiodor äußert, läuft Gefahr, unbefriedigende Debatten um die Epochengrenze zwischen Antike und Mittelalter auszulösen. Seine Lebensspanne fällt in eine Zeit, in der wichtige Weichenstellungen für die Ausgestaltung des mittelalterlichen Bildungswesens erfolgen, und er scheint durch seine prominente Stellung am ostgotischen Hof in besonderer Weise geeignet zu sein, wenigstens im Bereich der Bildung eine solche Epochengrenze zu markieren.’ See also Löwe (1948, 420): ‘Wer immer den Übergang von der Antike zum Mittelalter und das Ende der antiken Kultur Roms sich vergegenwärtigen will, dem wird Cassiodor vor Augen stehen als der Mann, in dessen Seele diese welthistorische Krise ihren deutlichsten Ausdruck fand.’ Van den Besselaar (1960, 11) qualifies Cassiodorus’ time as an ‘época caótica que prende a Idade Média à Antiguidade.’ He adds that ‘Cassiodoro não é tipicamente ‘antigo’ nem tipicamente ‘medieval’, sendo uma figura tão complexa como o foi o século em que viveu’ (1960, 12).

² On the various forms of linguistic reflexion in late antiquity see, for example, Marti (1974), Fögen (2000, 221–227), Chin (2008), and Denecker (2015). The user-friendly little booklet by Wissemann / Schmitz (2005) is mainly for didactic needs.

in previous centuries, linguistic and cultural issues are frequently intertwined, in particular in discussions concerning translation (see, for example, Fögen 2000, *passim*). Forms of language awareness can often be interpreted as expressions of intellectual, socio-cultural and political notions. Furthermore, reflexions on language and culture offer an opportunity for the treatment of other topics which may not be directly related. This may include an explicit or implicit personal agenda, for example an author's desire to portray himself and / or others in a specific light, often through polemics and praise, which point towards a distinctive target audience.

It also needs to be borne in mind that authors rarely ever write in isolation; instead they are members of certain intellectual networks or even schools whose ideas and doctrines they engage with. This engagement may take different forms: they may simply scrutinise certain patterns of thought, but they may also improve, expand, or revise established concepts normally associated with a particular group of individuals.

In this paper, I will concentrate on the statesman and scholar Cassiodorus and his ideas on language and culture in divine and secular learning, as expressed in his *Institutiones*, a work probably completed and published around A.D. 562.³ After a very succinct overview of Cassiodorus' life, I will sketch the more general character of his *Institutiones*, including the agenda and target audience of this work. Special attention will be dedicated to the programmatic prefaces to each book. In two further sections, I will then examine what Books 1 and 2 have to say on aspects of language and culture in the context of divine and secular learning.

2. *The character of Cassiodorus' Institutiones*

Cassiodorus was a member of an illustrious and influential family of Syrian origin who had emigrated to Italy around the middle of the fifth century and settled near Scyllaceum (modern-day Squillace in Calabria).⁴ Like his ancestors, he held a number of high public offices. As a rather young man (in A.D. 506/507), he became *quaestor sacri palatii* of the Italic Ostrogoth empire and was in charge of the redaction of the official royal documents in Theoderic's chancellery, a position which presupposed a highly developed rhetorical talent.⁵ In

³ See O'Donnell (1979, 192–193 with n. 21, 203 with n. 30) and Jenal (2005, 232), further Bürsgens (2003 [vol. 1], 49 with n. 166). But see Halporn / Vessey (2004, 42): «For the two-book work as a whole, and Book I as a part of it, our manuscript evidence refers exclusively to the more or less definitive redaction produced by Cassiodorus and his collaborators near the end of his life – that is, in the 580s.»

⁴ According to the most reliable manuscripts, his full name was Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator. On his life and work, see e.g. van de Vyver (1931), Bardy (1945), Löwe (1948, esp. 421–428), van den Besselaar (1950, *passim*), van den Besselaar (1960, 12–18), Stahl (1962, 202–205), O'Donnell (1979, 13–32 and *passim*), Krautschick (1983, 7–20), Barnish (1992, xxxvii–liii), Meyer-Flügel (1992, 29–41), Englisch (1994, 58–67), Caruso (1998, esp. 95–107), Hafner (2002, 11–12, 63–76), Bürsgens (2003 [vol. 1], 9–31), Steinhilber (2003, 134–138), Halporn / Vessey (2004, 13–19), Jenal (2005, 217–236), and Pronay (2014, 1–7); see also Barnish (1989). On the more general historical, socio-political and cultural background see Momigliano (1955), O'Donnell (1979, 1–12), Macpherson (1989, 11–148, 205–230), Meyer-Flügel (1992, *passim*), Caruso (1998, esp. 11–40, 53–94, 155–189), Kakridi (2005, 157–373), Janus / Dinzelbacher (2010, esp. 13–22), and Bjornlie (2013).

⁵ See Löwe (1948, 422–423): «[E]s war aber eine Tätigkeit, die über das rein Stilistische weit hinausging: galt es doch, den Römern die königlichen Absichten und Entscheidungen in möglichst ansprechender und

523 he succeeded Boethius as *magister officiorum*, and in September 533 he was appointed *praefectus praetorio*. After Rome was conquered by Justinian's commander Belisar (in 537), Cassiodorus withdrew from public office and experienced his *conversio*, a term presumably designating his transfer from the public to the private sphere, from a *vita activa* devoted to politics and administration to a more contemplative lifestyle mainly reserved for intellectual pursuits.⁶

Already in the mid 530s, he and pope Agapetus I had made plans to initiate a school in Rome for the study of the religious writings, taking pagan institutions such as the ones in Alexandria and Nisibis as their model. As he points out, the purpose of such an educational centre was not only the eternal salvation of the soul, but also the pure diction of the faithful, thus leading to a peculiar combination of spiritual and linguistic or stylistic concerns.⁷ Because of the political situation this project is unlikely to have moved beyond its initial stages. But twenty years later (presumably not before 554), Cassiodorus founded the ascetic community of Vivarium,⁸ located near Squillace and named after the numerous fishponds in this area.

For its members, whom Cassiodorus himself called 'monks' (*monachi mei*), he composed his *Institutiones divinarum et saecularium litterarum* in two books.⁹ This title clearly indicates the author's specific agenda. As he also emphasises right at the beginning of his work, he proposes an introductory manual that combines an overview of secular and Christian learning.¹⁰ What is crucial for him is the fact that the pagan liberal arts alone do not guarantee a full understanding of the world (*mundi prudentia*); only in combination with a thorough familiarity with Christian doctrines can such a knowledge be achieved. Following the

überzeugender Form darzulegen. Nach Cassiodors eigenem Ausspruch hatte sich der Quästor als Sprachrohr des Königs zu fühlen, und sein eigenes Gutdünken hatte ganz hinter dieser Pflicht zurückzutreten.» This is attested by Cassiodorus, Var. 6.5. For an accolade of Cassiodorus' eloquence and his outstanding character, see e.g. Var. 9.25 (king Athalaric addressing the Senate of Rome in A.D. 533).

⁶ On Cassiodorus' *conversio*, see esp. van de Vyver (1941, 77–88), van den Besselaar (1950, 134–160, esp. 146–154), O'Donnell (1979, esp. 103–116, 128–130), Krautschick (1983, 4–6, 11–12), Barnish (1989, 157–158, 166, 187), Bürgens (2003 [vol. 1], 13–19), Steinhilber (2003, 133–134, 137–138, 157–158), and Jenal (2005, 219–220) who states the following: «Mit dem Rückzug aus Amt und Öffentlichkeit wandte er sich jedenfalls einer entschieden christlichen Lebensform zu.»

⁷ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1 praef. 1: Nisus sum cum beatissimo Agapito papa urbis Romae ut, sicut apud Alexandriam multo tempore fuisse traditur institutum, nunc etiam in Nisibi civitate Syrorum Hebreis sedulo fertur exponi, collatis expensis in urbe Romana professores doctores scholae potius acciperent Christianae, unde et anima susciperet aeternam salutem et casto atque purissimo eloquio fidelium lingua comeretur. See further O'Donnell (1979, 182–185). – The critical edition of Cassiodorus' *Institutiones* used here throughout is that of Mynors (1963); English translations quoted in this article follow Halporn / Vessey (2004), with some minor modifications. The Latin text of Bürgens' edition (2003) is identical with that of Mynors'.

⁸ Ludwig (1967, 1) speaks of the «Klosterakademie Vivarium». But see Jenal (2005, 224): «Die in der Forschung immer wieder auftauchende Bezeichnung für Vivarium als 'Hochschule', 'Akademie' o. ä. geht von modernen Vorstellungen aus und trifft die Verhältnisse nicht.» On the character of Vivarium see also Bürgens (2003 [vol. 1], 17–29), van den Besselaar (1950, 154–155, 161–189), Helm (1954, 919–920), Alfonsi (1964, 7–9), Ludwig (1967, esp. 31–46), Weissengruber (1967, 209–215), Illmer (1971, 4–5, 49–57, 77–78), O'Donnell (1979, esp. 185, 189–202, 218–222), Viscido (1983, 9–17), Pricoco (1986, esp. 357–364, 371), Englisch (1994, 63–65), Riché (1995, 135–141), Caruso (1998, 255–258, 265), Jenal (2005, 223–224), and Viscido (2011, 15–41).

⁹ On the various forms of the title see Mynors (1963, lii–liii) and O'Donnell (1979, 204–205).

¹⁰ The introductory character of the work is signalled by the term *institutio* which is a translation of εἰσαγωγή. See Bürgens (2003 [vol. 1], 48–49); on εἰσαγωγή more generally see Asper (2007, 214–314).

standards of ancient prefaces to works of instruction and erudition as well as expectations among Christian authors concerning the use of rhetoric, he underscores that his introduction stands out through its usefulness (*utilitas*) rather than its rhetorical stylisation (*affectata eloquentia*), thus giving preference to *res* over *verba*.¹¹ Yet, as ever so often in ancient technical literature, this is an assertion that may be taken with a pinch of salt: in particular the prefaces themselves are frequently written in a rather intricate or even high-flown style, and the foreword to Cassiodorus' *Institutiones* is no exception in this respect, as the following excerpt may exemplify (Inst. 1 praef. 2):

Quapropter, dilectissimi fratres, indubitanter ascendamus ad divinam Scripturam per expositiones probabiles Patrum velut per quamdam scalam visionis Iacob, ut eorum sensibus provecti ad contemplationem Domini efficaciter pervenire mereamur. Ista est enim fortasse scala Iacob, per quam angeli ascendunt atque descendunt, cui Dominus innititur, lassiss porrigens manum et fessos ascendentium gressus sui contemplatione sustentans.

«Therefore, beloved brothers, let us ascend without hesitation to Holy Scripture through the excellent commentaries of the Fathers, as if on the ladder of Jacob's vision so that, lifted by their thoughts, we are worthy to arrive at full contemplation of the Lord. For commentary on Scripture is, as it were, Jacob's ladder, by which the angels ascend and descend; on which the Lord leans, stretching out his hand to those who are weary, and supports the tired steps of those ascending by granting them contemplation of Him.»

Theological progress, understood as cognitive or intellectual advancement, is here circumscribed through a well-known biblical picture (Gen. 28.12–15).¹² However, while Cassiodorus' reference to the angels and to God standing at the top of the ladder closely follows the first part of the biblical text (Gen. 28.12–13), he has replaced the subsequent paragraphs containing God's direct speech addressed to Jacob (Gen. 28.13–15) by an elaborate double participle construction which displays a different emphasis both in terms of style and content. The suggestive character of such stylised passages is by no means exaggerated or obtrusive, but suitable enough to advertise the educational programme of his work and to present himself as a thoughtful and knowledgeable writer.¹³ Thus, when van den Besselaar

¹¹ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1 praef. 1: per quos (sc. libros), sicut aestimo, et Scripturarum divinarum series et saecularium litterarum compendiosa notitia Domini munere panderetur – minus fortasse disertos, quoniam in eis non affectata eloquentia sed relatio necessaria reperitur. Utilitas vero inesse magna cognoscitur, quando per eos discitur unde et salus animae et saecularis eruditio provenire monstratur. See also the preface to his *De orthographia* (Gramm. Lat. 7144 Keil): deinde post institutiones, quem ad modum divinae et humanae debeant intellegi lectiones, duobus libris, ut opinor, sufficienter impletas, ubi plus utilitatis invenies quam decoris. On the conventions of ancient prefaces see in particular Janson (1964) and Fögen (2009, esp. 26–34); Santini / Scivoletto / Zurli (1990–1998) offer a useful collection of proems to Latin technical writings, accompanied by detailed analyses. On *utilitas* see Fögen (2009, index rerum, s. v. «Nützlichkeit») and Fögen (2016, 275). Pronay (2014, 13–18) makes some good observations on the style and literary level of the *Institutiones*; see also Ennis (1939), Jones (1945, 26–31), and Pachali (1947, 31–47).

¹² On this passage, see Pricoco (1986, 366–368).

¹³ On this strategy, see Fögen (2011, 450): «As can be observed in many prefaces to ancient technical treatises, several authors strive to demonstrate their rhetorical skills and transcend the narrow boundaries of a simple style. Vitruvius, for example, adds a carefully composed proem to each of the ten books of his *de Architectura* and uses these texts to display his intimate knowledge of the principles of good style. More importantly, he intersperses his prefaces with anecdotes which are employed to support his self-presentation as a true expert on technical matters, but also as a morally responsible writer (...). Elevated style is thus used to support a series of programmatic statements; it is by no means *l'art pour l'art* or introduced for the mere sake of the edification and entertainment of the reader. (...)»

(1950, 212) says that «(l)iteraire pretentie heeft het werkje niet; men zal er meer nut dan schoonheid in vinden, zegt de auteur ervan», he takes Cassiodorus too literally and ignores the highly conventional character of ancient prefaces.

Occasionally, samples of Cassiodorus' rhetorical dexterity can be identified beyond the prefaces. The subsequent passage on the beautiful nature of the psalter is a good example (Inst. 1.4.3):

Psalterium est enim quaedam caelestis sphaera stellis densa micantibus, et, ut ita dixerim, quidam pavo pulcherrimus qui velut oculorum orbibus et colorum multiplici et decora varietate depingitur; paradisi quin etiam animarum, poma continens innumera quibus suaviter mens humana saginata pinguescat.

«For the Psalter appears like a heavenly sphere thick with twinkling stars and, so to speak, like a beautiful peacock that is adorned with round eyes and a rich and lovely variety of colours. The psalter is indeed a paradise for souls, containing numberless fruits on which the human soul is sweetly fed and fattened.»

These carefully constructed comparisons of the psalter can certainly be taken as a sign of Cassiodorus' genuine enthusiasm for its edifying character. But from the exuberant rhetoric of this excerpt, one may infer that it is not only the ethical value, but also the aesthetic merit of the Book of Psalms which make it so attractive in his view.

Another section in which Cassiodorus employs a lofty tone is his extensive description of the location of Vivarium in Inst. 1.29.1. The vivid and detailed picture of a *locus amoenus* drawn here can undoubtedly be seen as a skilful *ekphrasis*, which has the function of illustrating the advantages for the members of his community, but also for others who are seeking refuge in a peaceful and secure atmosphere.¹⁴ It is tempting to contend that the calculated rhetoric of the whole paragraph fits with the artificial character of the place that it depicts. Nature has been tamed for the purposes of the monastery: Thanks to technical intervention, the nearby river does not present any danger and has been diverted in such a way that it provides water for the gardens and mills at Vivarium. Due to the proximity of the sea, ponds have been built for the keeping of fish. The water supplied by springs is used for baths and for drinking water. Cassiodorus mentions that these structures are to a large extent the result of his personal commitment. In other words, he is as much in charge of the organisation of Vivarium as he is of its rhetorical portrayal.

In addition, Cassiodorus wants to fill a gap in the instruction in the holy scriptures: He diagnoses a lack of public teachers in this area and presents his work as a remedy.¹⁵ At the same time, he does not claim any originality for the subject matter of his outline and attributes the doctrines that he expounds to earlier writers. However, this is not necessarily

¹⁴ In terms of their elaborate, stylised and passionate character, one may compare two passages in Cassiodorus' *Variae* where he describes the cities of Squillace (Var. 12.15) and Como (Var. 11.14). These texts seem to be indebted to the ancient tradition of «Städte lob»; see Fögen (2007, 261–262), with reference to Statius, *Silv.* 3.5 as well as other relevant primary sources and secondary literature, further Downey (1959, 926–928). Specifically on Var. 12.15, see Viscido (1987, 31–43) and Viscido (2011, 17–18). Janus / Dinzelsbacher (2010, 56) classify Var. 11.14 as a «Text der Fremdenverkehrswerbung avant la lettre».

¹⁵ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1 praef. 1: Cum studia saecularium litterarium magno desiderio fervere cognoscerem, ita ut multa pars hominum per ipsa se mundi prudentiam crederet adipisci, gravissimo sum, fateor, dolore permotus ut Scripturis divinis magistri publici deessent, cum mundani auctores celeberrima procul dubio traditione pollerent. See also further down in the same paragraph: (...) ad hoc divina caritate probor esse compulsus, ut ad vicem magistri introductorios vobis libros istos Domino praestante conficerem.

to be seen as a shortcoming of his work, as it enables its recipients to proceed to a better understanding of the Bible and it pays appropriate tribute to previous generations of scholars and their findings.¹⁶

The first book contains guidelines for those who had previously attended pagan schools and acquired the principles of secular learning, serving as the basis for their active engagement with Christian thinking, in particular in the form of the study and exegesis of the holy scriptures. After they have familiarised themselves with the Psalms, they ought to proceed to the diligent reading of faultless manuscripts of the Bible to acquire the expertise that will later help them identify mistakes made by careless copyists. Hence, the preservation of the correct biblical text, defined here as a manifestation of divine authority, is seen as indispensable for theological studies.¹⁷ With his *Institutiones*, Cassiodorus provides a detailed list of those passages that the ‘soldiers of Christ’ (*milites Christi*) are expected to peruse.¹⁸ But Book 1 also encompasses chapters on the structure of the Old and New Testaments (Inst. 1.13–14), guidance on their proper reading and the identification of divergences from the conventional text (Inst. 1.15), the orthographic rules to be observed by copyists of manuscripts (Inst. 1.30) and medical advice (Inst. 1.31), moreover sections on the ethical integrity and divine power of the holy scriptures (Inst. 1.16) and on the location of Vivarium and Mons Castellus (Inst. 1.28).

Although he is aware of the availability of exegetical writings in Greek which cover the complete Old and New Testaments, Cassiodorus prefers to focus on Latin authors. This decision is motivated by his target audience whose home is Italy, but also by a cognitive or even psychological cause: he argues that texts written in the readers’ mother tongue are more readily absorbed by them.¹⁹ At the same time, he does recognise that some exegetes writing in Latin may not always be fully satisfactory, and in such cases, he encourages those fluent in Greek to consult the works of Greek experts in the interest of a vigorous advancement of theological knowledge.²⁰

¹⁶ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1 praef. 1: In quibus non propriam doctrinam sed priscorum dicta commendo, quae posteris laudare fas est et praedicare gloriosum, quoniam quicquid de priscis sub laude Domini dicitur, odiosa iactantia non putatur.

¹⁷ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1 praef. 2: Quocirca, si placet, hunc debemus lectionis ordinem custodire, ut primum tyrones Christi, postquam psalmos didicerint, auctoritatem divinam in codicibus emendatis iugi exercitatione meditentur, donec illis fiat Domino praestante notissima, ne vitia librariorum impolitis mentibus inolescant, quia difficile potest erui, quod memoriae sinibus radicatum constat infigi.

¹⁸ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1 praef. 3: Quapropter, carissimi fratres, postquam se milites Christi divina lectione compleverint, et frequenti meditatione firmati cognoscere coeperint loca librorum oportune nominata, tunc huius operis instituta quispiam fortasse non inaniter transit, ubi legenda sunt his duobus libris aptissime suis locis et breviter indicantur.

¹⁹ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1 praef. 4: Ferunt itaque Scripturas divinas veteris novique Testamenti ab ipso principio usque ad finem Graeco sermone declarasse Clementem Alexandrinum cognomento Stromateum et Cyrillum eiusdem civitatis episcopum et Iohannem Chrysostomum, Gregorium et Basilium, necnon et alios studiosissimos viros quos Graecia facunda concelebrat. Sed nos potius Latinos scriptores Domino iuvante sectamur, ut quoniam Italis scribimus, Romanos quoque expositores commodissime indicasse videamur. Dulcius enim ab unoquoque suscipitur quod patrio sermone narratur (...).

²⁰ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1 praef. 3: Eoque provenit ut studiosi cognoscant, a quibus Latinis expositoribus singula quaeque declarata sunt. Quod si aliquid in eisdem neglegenter dictum reperit, tunc quibus lingua nota est a Graecis explanatoribus quae sunt salubriter tractata perquirant, quatenus in schola Christi neglegentiae tepore sublato vitalis agnitio flammatis mentibus inquiratur.

Cassiodorus also indicates that his selection of authors made for Book 1 is based upon a conscious decision which strives to guarantee the feasibility of his project (Inst. 1 praef. 5):

Moderamini ergo, studiosi fratres, sapienter desideria vestra, per ordinem quae sunt legenda discentes, imitantes scilicet eos qui corpoream habere desiderant sospitatem. Nam qui sanari volunt, a medicis quaerunt quas escas primum, quas secunda refectio percipiant, ne tenuissimas vires debilium membrorum oneret potius quam reficiat confusa voracitas.

«Therefore, brothers eager for learning, wisely moderate your desires, and in imitation of those who desire to gain health of the body, let us learn what is to be read in proper order. For those who want to be cured ask the doctors what foods they should take first, what refreshment they should take next, so that an indiscriminate appetite does not tax rather than restore the failing strength of their weakened limbs.»

This excerpt is another instance of Cassiodorus' endeavour to compose a stylistically pleasing and thematically convincing preface. The passage implies that Cassiodorus is like a medical doctor who knows what is good for his patients and what is not. It is this expertise that signals his authoritative voice which is typical of ancient technical texts (see Fögen 2009, *passim*). At the same time, it is a recommendation to his monks to avoid an exaggerated and indiscriminate pursuit of educational material.

The second book of the *Institutiones* comprises seven chapters which treat the following disciplines: grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy. This list is identical with the *septem artes liberales* also dealt with by Martianus Capella in his work *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, albeit not in exactly the same order or to a similar extent.²¹ The case of the later Isidore of Seville is a bit more complicated. Towards the beginning of his *Etymologiae*, he provides a list of the seven arts (Etym. 1.2.1–3) whose order corresponds exactly to that of Cassiodorus' *Institutiones*; but the actual sequence then slightly diverges from this initial catalogue. Grammar is discussed in Book 1, rhetoric and dialectic are covered in Book 2, and arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy, which fall under the category of mathematics (as explained in Etym. 3 praef.), are dealt with in Book 3. Hence it is only music and geometry that have changed their place with regard to the original series of the introduction.²²

With 65 pages in Mynors' critical edition (excluding preface and conclusion), Cassiodorus' account in Book 2 is relatively short. Nevertheless, the elements of learning expounded here have a high relevance for the theological world, and they ultimately have their roots in the holy scriptures anyway, as Cassiodorus states.²³ Although he cites two

²¹ The arrangement of the *artes* in Martianus Capella is as follows: grammar (Book 3), dialectic (Book 4), rhetoric (Book 5), geometry (Book 6), arithmetic (Book 7), astronomy (Book 8), and harmony (Book 9). For a detailed overview of the structure and content of this work, see Zekl (2005, 23–43) who also offers a complete German translation. The most recent analysis of *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* is Gerth (2013, 114–156) who believes that the work may have been written after 410 and some time before 498 (Gerth 2013, 118); on Martianus Capella, see also Stahl (1962, 170–190) and Hadot (2005, 137–155, 391–410). It should be noted that Cassiodorus himself did not have direct access to Martianus' work and knew it only from hearsay (Inst. 2.3.20).

²² Referring back to Cassiodorus' *Institutiones*, Ribémont (2001, 100–107) devotes a longer section to the order of the *quadrivium* in Isidore's *Etymologiae*. See also Moorhead (1992).

²³ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1 praef. 6: Constat enim quasi in origine spiritalis sapientiae rerum istarum indicia fuisse seminata, quae postea doctores saecularium litterarum ad suas regulas prudentissime transtulerunt (...).

anecdotes about how uneducated but pious individuals – an old man and a barbaric slave – were suddenly able to read a manuscript or even to elucidate the meaning of an enigmatic biblical passage, he adds that, rather than relying upon divine illumination alone, it is preferable to have acquired proper technical skills which will be consolidated through regular and attentive reading as well as prayer (Inst. 1 praef. 7).

Although Cassiodorus' own function at Vivarium is not entirely clear, it is obvious that he had a leading role in the promotion of Christian learning. His intellectual weight also becomes apparent from the way in which he has set up religious texts for the monks of his community. Following the model of Jerome, he has structured these documents through *cola* and *commata* to facilitate their reading for even less well-versed brothers.²⁴ These remarks once again reveal that the monks living and working at Vivarium did not constitute a homogeneous group; instead, there must have been considerable differences concerning their level of education and skills. This impression is also confirmed by the twenty-eighth chapter of Book 1 which puts forward a list of texts to be read by those monks who are intellectually incapable of gaining access to the *scripturae logicae*.²⁵ Moreover, the paragraphs that follow the passage on *cola* and *commata* show Cassiodorus' interest in orthographic issues which he regards as vital for any occupation involving texts. It is thus no surprise that he wrote a separate treatise *De orthographia*.²⁶

The scope and arrangement of the two books of the *Institutiones*, delineated at the end of each preface and hence reminiscent of similar techniques in earlier technical works,²⁷ are inspired by holy numbers: The thirty-three chapters of Book 1 allude to the age of Jesus at his death (Inst. 2 praef. 1), while the seven chapters of Book 2 correspond to the most prominent holy number, as Cassiodorus illustrates through a series of examples from the holy scriptures (Inst. 2 praef. 2).²⁸ How much importance he assigns to the secular disciplines discussed in his work can be deduced from the following quotation (Inst. 2 praef. 2):

²⁴ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1 praef. 9: Illud quoque credidimus commonendum, sanctum Hieronymum simplicium fratrum consideratione pellectum in Prophetarum praeafatione dixisse, propter eos qui distinctiones non didicerant apud magistros saecularium litterarum colis et commatibus translationem suam, sicut hodie legitur, distinxisse. Quod nos quoque tanti viri auctoritate commoniti sequendum esse iudicavimus, ut cetera distinctionibus ornentur. (...). On Jerome as his model, see also Inst. 1.12.4. On *cola* and *commata* see van de Vyver (1931, 267–269), Viscido (1978, 82–83), Bürgens (2003 [vol. 1], 56–58, 108–109 n. 31), and Pronay (2014, 201–203), with further references.

²⁵ On Inst. 1.28 see Ludwig (1967, 155). See also Cassiodorus, Inst. 1.8.11 where he differentiates between beginners and advanced readers: Dictae sunt igitur annotationes epistularum a nonnullis breviter comprehensae. Nunc per ordinem dicamus, sicut et in Prophetis factum est, qui eas latius exponere maluerunt; ut illud datum *inchoantibus*, hoc reservatum videatur esse *perfectis*.

²⁶ This work, produced for the scribes among his monks at the age of 93 (see Jenal 2005, 235; Pronay 2014, 205), is easily accessible in the seventh volume of Heinrich Keil's *Grammatici Latini* (Leipzig 1880, 143–210). For a recent critical edition see Stoppacci (2010). See further van den Besselaar (1950, 240–242, 248–250), O'Donnell (1979, 229–237), and Bertini (1986). O'Donnell (1979, 232) maintains that in this work Cassiodorus «is offering the rudiments to scribes with very little competence at all.»

²⁷ See Fögen (2009, 120–121 n. 36, 171, 211–214, 275, 290), with further references.

²⁸ On the seven chapters of Book 2, see Ludwig (1967, 127): «(...) Die sieben Abschnitte sind eine Theorie richtigen Erkennens und richtiger Anwendung von Wort und Schrift, wie von der Gestaltung der künstlerischen Dinge zu ihrem wahren Zweck. (...)» However, on the whole, the structure of the *Institutiones*, especially of Book 1, is not always very straightforward – despite its pronounced *Zahlenmystik*. On the arrangement of the work see e.g. Pronay (2014, 8–13), who offers the following estimation of Book 1 (2014, 8): «Das erste Buch der *Institutiones* erweist sich, wenn man die Anordnung ihrer Teile und ihr Verhältnis zueinander in den Blick zu bekommen versucht, als ein recht uneinheitliches Gebilde: Abgesehen

Sciendum est plane quoniam frequenter, quicquid *continuum atque perpetuum* Scriptura sancta vult intellegi, sub isto numero comprehendit (...). Merito ergo ibi semper commemoratur, ubi perpetuum tempus ostenditur.

«It must be clearly understood that often Sacred Scripture uses the number seven to mean *continuous and perpetual*. (...) Rightly therefore it is always used there where perpetual time is to be understood.»

As in other passages of Cassiodorus' work, pagan and Christian learning thus become inextricably interwoven.²⁹ This conclusion is corroborated by the way in which he connects the subject matter of the seven disciplines discussed in Book 2 to the divine sphere. For example, arithmetic deserves a great deal of praise, as God has structured the world through the principles of number, weight and measure – a doctrine endorsed by several quotations from the holy scriptures.³⁰ When Cassiodorus then compares the workings of God to those of the devil, it is evident that scholarship and learning are not just about the acquisition of knowledge, but that they also have striking moral implications (Inst. 2 praef. 3):

Quapropter operae Dei singulares atque magnificae necessaria definitione conclusae sunt, ut, sicut eum omnia condidisse credimus, ita et quemammodum facta sunt aliquatenus disceremus. Unde datur intellegi malas operas diaboli nec pondere nec mensura nec numero contineri, quoniam quicquid agit iniquitas, iustitiae semper adversum est (...).

«Therefore each wonderful work of God is bounded by an indispensable limit. Since we believe that God created everything, we may to a certain extent learn how things are made. We are given to understand that the evil works of the devil are not defined by weight, measure and number, since the result of injustice is always the opposite of justice (...).»

The result of this shrewd reasoning is that the secular *artes* are appropriated by Christian theology – or, to put it more strongly, they ultimately derive their justification from their more or less direct relationship with divine power and are implicitly sanctioned by the Christian God. For that reason, no one needs to worry about being involved in pagan matters, although it has to be admitted that the profane writers referred to by Cassiodorus, especially in Book 2, are for the most part authors of works falling under the category of

davon, dass alle Kapitel mehr oder weniger allgemein etwas mit dem Leben und der Tätigkeit der Mönche CASSIODORS zu tun haben (...), ist es kaum ersichtlich, welcher thematische Grund die jetzt vorliegende Anordnung der Kapitel bewirkt und gestaltet hat. (...)»

²⁹ See also Cassiodorus, Inst. 1.28.3–4: Verumtamen nec illud Patres sanctissimi decreverunt, ut saecularium litterarum studia respuantur, quia non exinde minimum ad sacras Scripturas intellegendas sensus noster instruitur. Si tamen, divina gratia suffragante, notitia ipsarum rerum sobrie ac rationabiliter inquiratur, non ut in ipsis habeamus spem provectus nostri, sed per ipsa transeuntes desideremus nobis «a Patre luminum» proficuum salutaremque sapientiam debere concedi. (...). Multi iterum Patres nostri talibus litteris eruditi et in lege Domini permanentes ad veram sapientiam pervenerunt (...).

³⁰ Cassiodorus, Inst. 2 praef. 3: Sic arithmetica disciplina magna laude dotata est, quando et rerum opifex Deus dispositiones suas sub numeri, ponderis et mensurae quantitate constituit, sicut ait Salomon: «Omnia in numero, mensura et pondere fecisti.» (...). See also Inst. 1.6.2 on dialectic having its origin in the holy scriptures: Quanta enim liber ille (i.e. the Book of Job) continet suavia sacramenta verborum, sicut beatus Hieronymus dicit in epistula quam dirigit ad Paulinum: «Prosa incipit, versu labitur, pedestri sermone finitur, omniaque legis dialecticae propositione, assumptione, confirmatione, conclusione determinat.» Quod si ita est – nec aliter esse potest quam quod tanti viri celebrat auctoritas –, ubi sunt qui dicunt artem dialecticam ab Scripturis sanctissimis non coepisse?

technical treatises,³¹ while representatives of *belles lettres* and other literary genres are mentioned only rarely – usually in the form of brief quotations supporting a certain phenomenon (such as a rhetorical figure), not as essential items on the list of recommended reading for monks.³²

Towards the end of the preface to Book 2, he provides brief definitions of the content and purpose of the seven areas that he has included in this section of his work. Following an earlier verdict of his own (Var. 9.21.3–4; see appendix), Cassiodorus determines grammar as the most fundamental of all disciplines (Inst. 2 praef. 4) and consequently treats it in the very first chapter of Book 2, before the treatment of rhetoric in Inst. 2.2. In this regard, he pursues a similar strategy as Quintilian who also begins his *Institutio oratoria* with an account of the principles of grammar before he then moves on to rhetoric itself.³³ It is perhaps no coincidence that Cassiodorus entitled his compendium *Institutiones* which many of his readers will have associated with Quintilian's handbook, among other works.³⁴

3. *Language and culture in Book 1 of Cassiodorus' Institutiones*

In the first nine chapters of Book 1, Cassiodorus compiles lists of commentaries on the holy writings which monks will find useful for their needs. What is more, he has collected as many of them as possible in the library of Vivarium where they are readily available for the members of his community, and he is eager to get hold of those books which he has not yet been able to obtain.³⁵ A lot of these works have the virtue of illuminating the meaning

³¹ For a definition of ancient 'technical literature' see Fögen (2009, esp. 9–25) and Fögen (2016, esp. 266–267).

³² In Book 1 such references are limited to Inst. 1.1.8 (Vergil's dictum on Ennius), 1.4.2 (quotation of one line from Vergil's *Eclogues*), 1.17.1 (comparison of Josephus with Livy), and 1.28.5 (quotation of two lines from Vergil's *Georgics*). In Book 2, the chapters on rhetoric and dialectic give a few examples from Cicero's speeches, Terence's *Andria* and Vergil's *Aeneid* (Inst. 2.2.13, 2.3.14–15). Nevertheless, although Cassiodorus does not explicitly recommend the reading of these authors (see also van de Vyver 1931, 279), he is eager to mention them at least in passing, as it suggests his familiarity with them to his readers. Such references might, of course, be no more than second-hand quotations, not necessarily based upon an actual perusal of these writers. For further discussion of quotations and allusions in Cassiodorus' works, see Bacherler (1923), Alfonsi (1964, 15–19), and Aricò (1986, 161–173); see also O'Donnell (1979, 91, 141–143).

³³ On the importance of grammar in Quintilian, see Fögen (2000, 142–151) and Chin (2008, 3–4). See also Inst. orat. 1 praef. 5 on his more general conviction that success in rhetoric can only be achieved if the training in this field has a robust basis: *Ego cum existimem nihil arti oratoriae alienum sine quo fieri non posse oratorem fatendum est, nec ad ullius rei summam nisi praecedentibus initiis perveniri, ad minora illa, sed quae si neglegas non sit maioribus locus, demittere me non recusabo, nec aliter quam si mihi tradatur educandus orator studia eius formare ab infantia incipiam.*

³⁴ See Fontaine (1986, 80) and Pollmann (2004, 297–298), both of whom also refer to Lactantius' *Divinae institutiones*; on the title of this work, see Hagendahl (1983, 40) and Pollmann (2004, 297 n. 37). On possible further models see O'Donnell (1979, 204–205), Holtz (1986, 283), and Ribémont (2001, 24). According to van den Besselaar (1950, 212), «(d)ie naam *Institutiones* herinnert aan de juridische handboeken (...).»

³⁵ Despite these efforts, it is misguided to reduce Cassiodorus to «un bibliothécaire consciencieux», as Ribémont (2001, 21) does, following Holtz (1986, 283): «Les *Institutions* ne sont autre chose qu'une bibliographie analytique des ouvrages effectivement présents à Vivarium ou que Cassiodore souhaite acquérir pour enrichir la bibliothèque.» As Alfonsi (1964, 15) has rightly pointed out, «non è solo una bibliografia l'*Institutio* cassiodoriana, ma (...) un umano documento di vita, un vero e proprio breviario di Maestro per la formazione del nuovo *civis*, che sente il richiamo della perfezione evangelica.»

of biblical passages and of providing an in-depth discussion of them. For such exegetical works clarity and diligence are seen as particularly desirable.³⁶ But apart from perspicuity and scholarly competence, a certain rhetorical talent is also appreciated, as a passage on Ambrosius' *Hexaemeron* demonstrates (Inst. 1.1.3):

Deinde sanctus Ambrosius, ut est planus atque suavissimus doctor, exinde sex libros eloquentiae suae more confecit, quos appellavit Exameron.

«St. Ambrose, a lucid and pleasant teacher, wrote six books on this subject in his usual eloquent style and called the work *On the Six Days of Creation*.»

Cassiodorus has similar words of admiration for Augustine who is presented as an exemplar of learning, eloquence and circumspection (see e.g. Inst. 1.1.4). However, these are by no means isolated cases; commendation on such grounds is a recurrent feature of the *Institutiones*. To his readers it accentuates Cassiodorus' expertise which guarantees the selection of only the best writers.

In some instances he supplies further details concerning their linguistic and stylistic accomplishments. For example, the exceptional quality of Augustine's treatise *De modis locutionum* consists in the fact that its conscious avoidance of complex expressions and phrases makes it accessible even to a less sophisticated readership.³⁷ In the case of Jerome, it is his knowledge of Hebrew and his activity as a translator into Latin that have established his excellent reputation as a scholar. According to Cassiodorus, his work *Hebraica nomina* which explains the meaning of Hebrew proper names and toponyms is particularly laudable (see e.g. Inst. 1.1.6; cf. 1.3.5). In conjunction with his remarks on Jerome's translation of Origen's two homilies, he calls him the «outstanding multiplier of the Latin language» (Inst. 1.5.4: *Latinae linguae multiplicator egregius*), which seems to refer to the extension or expansion of the Latin vocabulary.³⁸ For him, Jerome also deserves recognition for the fact that he detected mistakes in existing translations of the Hebrew original of the Old Testament and took great pains to create an accurate version of his own that was faithful to the biblical text.³⁹ Another admirable translator touched upon by Cassiodorus is his bilingual

³⁶ See e.g. Cassiodorus, Inst. 1.1.1 concerning Eustathius' Latin translation of Basilus' Greek exegesis of the Book of Genesis: Qui usque ad hominis conditionem novem libros tetendit, ubi et caeli et terrae naturam, aeris et aquarum vel creaturarum paene omnium qualitates aperuit, ut quod in auctoritate brevitatis studio praetermissum est, tractatum latius minutissime atque clarissime disceretur. See also the following paragraph (Inst. 1.1.2) on Augustine: Nam et pater Augustinus, contra Manicheos duobus libris disputans, ita textum Genesis diligenter exposuit, ut paene nihil ibi relinquere probaretur ambiguum (...).

³⁷ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1.1.4: Scripsit etiam de modis locutionum septem alios mirabiles libros, ubi et schemata saecularium litterarum et multas alias locutiones Scripturae divinae proprias, id est, quas communis usus non haberet, expressit, considerans ne compositionum novitate reperta legentis animus nonnullis offensionibus angeretur (...).

³⁸ Cf. Cicero, De fato 1: augentem linguam Latinam. See also Cassiodorus, Inst. 1.21.1: Beatus etiam Hieronymus, Latinae linguae dilatator eximius, qui nobis in translatione divinae Scripturae tantum praestitit, ut ad Hebreum fontem paene non egeamus accedere, quando nos facundiae suae multa cognoscitur ubertate satiasset (...). Halporn / Vessey (2004, 123) translate *multiplicator* as «propagator» which has a broader meaning than «multiplier». Pronay (2014, 46) opts for «Mehr(er)», Denecker (2015, 168) for «multiplier»; see also Ennis (1939, 11).

³⁹ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1.12.2: Sciendum est plane sanctum Hieronymum ideo diversorum translationes legisse atque correxisse, eo quod auctoritati Hebraicae nequaquam eas perspicere consonare. Unde factum est ut omnes libros veteris Testamenti diligenti cura in Latinum sermonem de Hebreo fonte transfunderet, et ad viginti duarum litterarum modum qui apud Hebreos manet competenter adduceret (...).

contemporary Dionysius Exiguus (c. 470–c. 550), who is Scythian by origin, but thoroughly Romanised (Inst. 1.23.2). He was so fluent in Greek and Latin that he was able to generate impromptu renderings of Greek texts into Latin and *vice versa*.⁴⁰

However, in addition to these and other authors' intellectual capacity and linguistic proficiency,⁴¹ it is not least through the favour and help of God that they produce exegetical works of such eminence which make a significant contribution to an understanding of the holy writings and thus advance the field of theology.⁴²

Interestingly, Cassiodorus applies such appraisals also to his own activities, thus adding himself to the group of celebrated authorities (Inst. 1.4.2):

A quo, ut fieri solet, mutuans lumen de lumine, aliqua de ipso Domino largiente conscripsi (...). Ubi nullam causam digressiva relatione miscuimus, sed in vicem annotationum breviter de singulis locis diximus, quod textus ipsius qualitas expetebat. Quem si aliquis dignatus fuerit post tales viros fortasse relegere, cognoscet, sicut et alii Patres sententia indubitata dixerunt, de Scripturis divinis emanasse quod doctores saecularium litterarum ad sua studia postea transtulerunt. Quae nos, ut se locus attulit, Domino iuvante quantum valuimus (ni fallor) ostendimus.

«And, as one draws light from light, so with the Lord's bounty, I have written drawing on him (sc. Augustine) (...). In this work I have not disturbed the Psalm text under discussion by straying from the subject, but in place of glosses I have stated briefly on each passage as the nature of the text itself demands. If anyone perchance deigns to read this work after reading such great commentators he will understand (as the other Fathers also unassailably claimed) that Sacred Scripture is the source of what the teachers of secular letters afterwards transferred to their field. I have (if I am not mistaken) demonstrated this as occasion arose to the best of my ability with the Lord's aid.»

This quotation proves that Cassiodorus is keen to be perceived as someone who is more than just a collector of others' works. Despite the modest tone of this excerpt, he highlights the systematicity and diligence of his own writings, and he also refers to God's support that he has enjoyed in this context.⁴³

⁴⁰ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1.23.2: qui tanta Latinitatis et Graecitatis peritia fungebatur, ut quoscumque libros Graecos in manibus acciperet, Latine sine offensione transcurreret, iterumque Latinos Attico sermone relegeret, ut crederes hoc esse conscriptum, quod os eius inoffensa velocitate fundebat. On Dionysius Exiguus see e.g. Courcelle (1948, 313–316), Peitz (1960), Ludwig (1967, 20–21), and Caruso (1998, 210–212), who remarks that «(t)utto il capitolo XXIII delle *Institutiones* è un panegirico di Dionigi (...)» (1998, 211–212); see already Bardy (1945, 412) and van den Besselaar (1950, 223): «Cassiodorus bewonderde den man zeer (...) en heeft aan die bewondering op de hem eigen welbespraakte wijze uiting gegeven.»

⁴¹ Repeatedly, their high moral standards, their piety and their exemplary conduct are also highlighted. This is particularly well testified by Inst. 1.18–23 on Hilarius, Cyprian, Ambrosius, Jerome, Augustine and Dionysius Exiguus.

⁴² See e.g. Inst. 1.1.4 on Augustine (Domino largiente), 1.3.1 on Jerome (Christo Domino largiente), 1.3.5 on Jerome (Domino largiente), 1.5.2 on Epiphanius (Domino iuvante), 1.6.6 on Bellator (Domino iuvante), 1.9.1 on his friends (iuvante Domino), 1.16.4 on Augustine (indulgentia divina), 1.17.2 on Marcellinus Illyricus (Domino iuvante), 1.17.3 on doctissimi viri (divina inspiratione ... praestante Domino), 1.18 on Hilarius of Poitiers (praestante Deo), 1.19 on Cyprian (Domino praestante), 1.20 on Ambrosius (gratia divinitatis), and 1.21.1 on Jerome (Domino praestante). For a more general summary of this idea, see Inst. 1.28.2–5 (with §§ 3 and 4 partially quoted above, n. 29).

⁴³ In Book 1, further references to Cassiodorus enjoying God's support can also be found in Inst. 1.1.9 (praestante Domino), 1.3.1 (Domino praestante), 1.3.3 (Domino iuvante), 1.4.1 (Domino praestante), 1.5.4 (Domino iuvante), 1.5.7 (iuvante Domino), 1.8.2 (quendam anonymum codicem subnotatum divina rep-

For his demanding mission, he was able to enlist some highly skilled friends who would become involved in the linguistic adaptation of foreign-language works. Epiphanius translated Didymus' Greek exegesis of the Book of Proverbs as well as other texts into Latin (Inst. 1.5.2, 1.5.4, 1.8.6, 1.11.2, 1.171), Mutianus rendered John Chrysostom's Greek treatment of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Inst. 1.8.3) and Gaudentius' Ἀρμονικὴ εἰσαγωγή (Inst. 2.5.1),⁴⁴ and Bellator, who also produced commentaries on several works (Inst. 1.1.9, 1.5.5, 1.6.6), translated Origen's homilies on the Books of Ezra (Inst. 1.6.6). Furthermore, there are passages in which Cassiodorus does not explicitly mention the names of the translators in charge; instead, he says that he commissioned the Latin translation of a particular work, as in Inst. 1.171 where he briefly talks about the challenging task of translating Josephus' *Antiquitates Iudaicorum* into Latin or as in Inst. 1.9.5 where he refers to *amici nostri* having recently been entrusted with the Latin rendering of Greek commentators. However, such 'translations' may not always preserve the original text in its entirety, as can be gathered from Cassiodorus' remark that he made sure that the Latin rendering of the commentaries on the canonical letters of the Apostles by Clement of Alexandria no longer contained any offensive passages.⁴⁵ Translating can thus be turned into a business that is capable of shifting the substance of the views and opinions of the original author. For Cassiodorus, however, this kind of interference is a legitimate procedure, as it protects the readers' moral integrity and does not confuse them with any awkward or misleading doctrines.⁴⁶ At the same time, the fact that he commissioned translations and that he wanted them to conform with a specific set of beliefs underpins his role as intellectual vanguard and co-ordinator of studies carried out at Vivarium.⁴⁷ The impression that he creates is that he is surrounded by likeminded friends and therefore the leading part of a network of scholars who have the same goals.

Particularly intriguing from a linguistic perspective is the long chapter 1.15 which serves to assist in the preservation of the correct text of the holy scriptures.⁴⁸ This does not simply

peri provisione collatum), 1.8.6 (Domino largiente), 1.8.8 (Christo largiente), 1.8.14 (Domini miseratione), 1.10.3 (Domino iuvante), 1.21.2 (Domino largiente), 1.26.1 (praestante Domino), 1.31.2 (Deo auxiliante), and 1.33.4 (adiutorio dominicae gratiae). See also Ennis (1939, 138), Pachali (1947, 32), Lehmann (1959, 60), O'Donnell (1979, 188 with n. 12), and Bürsgens (2003 [vol. 1], 50 with n. 172).

⁴⁴ On the translator Mutianus see Wilhelmsson (1944). See also Courcelle (1948, 376–377).

⁴⁵ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1.8.4: In epistulis autem canonicis Clemens Alexandrinus presbyter, qui et Stromatheus vocatur – id est, in epistula sancti Petri prima, sancti Iohannis prima et secunda, et Iacobi –, quaedam Attico sermone declaravit; ubi multa quidem subtiliter, sed aliqua incaute locutus est. Quae nos ita transferri fecimus in Latinum, ut exclusis quibusdam offenculis purificata doctrina eius securior potuisset audiri. On this passage, see Mülke (2008, 177–178), with further literature.

⁴⁶ Beyond the context of translating, see e.g. Inst. 1.9.3 for Cassiodorus' concern for 'acceptable' doctrines: Ticonius etiam Donatista in eodem volumine quaedam non respuenda subiunxit, quaedam vero venenosi dogmatis sui fecilenta permiscuit; cui tantum in bonis dictis 'chresimon', in malis 'achriston' quantum transiens valui reperire, ut arbitror, competenter affixi. Quod et vobis similiter in suspectis expositoribus facere suademus, ne lectoris animus fortasse turbetur nefandi dogmatis permixtione confusus. See also Inst. 1.10.3–5 and 1.11.1. On the background of Inst. 1.9.3 concerning *notae*, see Viscido (1984).

⁴⁷ But as part of his managerial oversight, he even procures handy technical equipment for the monks such as mechanical oil lamps (Inst. 1.30.4) and different types of clocks (Inst. 1.30.5). He is also concerned about the aesthetic quality of manuscripts and has found *doctos artifices* in charge of their binding, with the following objective in mind: ut litterarum sacrarum pulchritudinem facies desuper decora vestiret, exemplum illud Dominicae figurionis ex aliqua parte forsitan imitantes, qui eos quod ad cenam aestimat invitandos in gloria caelestis convivii stolis nuptialibus operuit (Inst. 1.30.3).

⁴⁸ See Viscido (1978) and Pergoli Campanelli (2013, 83–95, esp. 87–94).

concern orthographic mistakes, although these also merit careful attention in a later section (Inst. 1.30). Rather, Cassiodorus addresses the following issues:

- (1) Specific phrases (*idiomata*):
Specific phrases or fixed expressions (*idiomata*) occurring in the Bible should not be adjusted to conventional parlance, as it would destroy the purity of these holy words. They may diverge from common usage (*communis usus*), but since they have divine authority, they are sanctioned. Hence in this case, *autoritas* outweighs *usus* or *consuetudo*, with *autoritas* being applied to the holy scriptures.⁴⁹ For further information on this topic, Cassiodorus recommends Augustine's comprehensive treatise *De modis locutionum*.
- (2) Hebrew proper names and toponyms:
Hebrew proper names and toponyms should not be mutilated by pressing them into any declension pattern unless they end with letters which lend themselves to flexion in accordance with the Latin system. This rule is prompted by the aesthetic quality of Hebrew which ought to be preserved as far as possible in Latin translations in order to show an appropriate amount of reverence for the holy nature of the proper names and place names of this language.⁵⁰
- (3) Ambiguous words:
Certain words which have a good and a bad meaning or words standing for others should not be disfigured, as this would mean a sacrilege directed towards the holy text. The clarification of the meaning of such words is the task of commentators, not of copyists.⁵¹
- (4) Linguistic patterns contradicting usage:
Further cases where *autoritas* is to be implemented as the supreme linguistic norm are words and grammatical patterns running counter to common usage (*usus* or *consuetudo*). However, as they are attested by numerous manuscripts of the holy writings and are thus to be seen as the result of God's inspiration, they ought to be ac-

⁴⁹ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1.15.2: In primis igitur idiomata Scripturae divinae nulla praesumptione temeritis, nec cum ad intellectum communem quae dicta sunt trahere cupitis (quod absit) caelestium verborum puritas dissipetur. Idiomata enim legis divinae dicuntur propriae locutiones, quas communis usus non habere cognoscitur, ut est illud: <Secundum innocentiam manuum mearum>, vel <De vultu tuo iudicium meum prodeat> – <Auribus percipe lacrimas meas> (...). Haec et his similia, quae nimis probantur esse numerosa, licet communis usus refugiat, tamen ne dissipari liceat, auctoritas illa procul dubio sancta commendat. On the ancient debate on linguistic norms see Siebenborn (1976) and Fögen (1998). Specifically on *idiomata*, see O'Donnell (1979, 160–161).

⁵⁰ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1.15.3: Hebrea vero quaedam nomina hominum vel locorum nulla declinatione frangatis; servetur in eis linguae suae decora sinceritas. Illas tantum litteras commutemus, quae vocabuli ipsius possunt exprimere qualitatem, quoniam interpretatione nominis sui unum quodque eorum magno sacramento rei alicuius constat appositum, ut est Seth, Enoch, Lamech, Noe, Sem Cham et Iafeth, Aaron, David et his similia. Locorum autem nomina, ut est Sion, Choreb, Geon, Hermon vel his similia, pari devotione linquamus.

⁵¹ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1.15.4: Tertio res quae in bono et in malo ponuntur non sunt ullatenus temerandae, ut <mons>, <leo>, <cedrus>, <catulus leonis>, <clamor>, <homo>, <fructus>, <calix>, <vitulus>, <pastor>, <thesaurus>, <vermis>, <canis> et his similia. Nec illa nomina mutanda sunt, quae pro aliis nominibus apponuntur, ut: <Satanas> qui a recto calle discedit – <manus lavare> significat non esse participem (...). Ista enim ab expositioribus nobis aperienda desideremus; non aliquid eorum sacrilega voluntate truncemus.

cepted as they are.⁵² The two subsequent paragraphs then narrow down how exactly the criterion of *auctoritas* is to be understood here: In particular ancient manuscripts that have already been corrected should be consulted for the justification of such essentially ungrammatical elements; authority therefore ultimately coincides with old age (*vetustas*).⁵³ The weight of such evidence directly mirroring the divine word is rated as preferable to the customary rules of Latin style. The rationale behind such an evaluation is the different status of the word of God and of human speech which both follow their own system.⁵⁴ For further clarification Cassiodorus spends the next sections on copyists' mistakes that do not take their legitimacy from the *sacra auctoritas* and thus need to be corrected (Inst. 1.15.8–10). This pertains to grammatical as well as orthographic parameters; for the latter he urges his readers to review separate manuals, including his own work *De orthographia* (Inst. 1.15.10; see also 1.30.2). In certain cases, it might also help to take a careful look at the Hebrew original of Latin translations or take advice from experts in Hebrew (Inst. 1.15.11).

He rounds this extensive chapter off with passages on punctuation marks, called *positurae* in Latin and *θέσεις* in Greek (Inst. 1.15.12), and on the amendment of non-biblical works (Inst. 1.15.14). He also brings to mind the high degree of responsibility of anyone correcting sacred or other texts (Inst. 1.15.15):

Considerate igitur qualis vobis causa commissa sit, utilitas Christianorum, thesaurus ecclesiae, lumen animarum. Studete ergo ne qua remaneat in veritate mendositas, in puritate falsitas, in integritate perversitas litterarum.

«Consider, therefore, the sort of case entrusted to you, the benefit of Christians, the treasury of the Church, the enlightenment of souls. See carefully to it, therefore, that no error is left in the truth, no falseness in the purity, and no scribal mistake in the corrected text.»

The syntax of this appeal is conspicuous through its parallel arrangement of two imperatives (*considerate* and *studete*) accompanied by causal particles (*igitur* and *ergo*) and followed by subordinate clauses which both incorporate tricola of substantives in the nominative, combined with genitive attributes and prepositional ablative constructions respectively. Moreover, the nominatives of the first series (*utilitas*, *thesaurus*, *lumen*) have a positive meaning, those of the second series (*mendositas*, *falsitas*, *perversitas*) a negative one. This semantic contrast is enhanced by the positioning of their complements: The genitive at-

⁵² Cassiodorus, Inst. 1.15.5: Nec illa verba tangenda sunt, quae interdum contra artem quidem humanam posita reperiuntur, sed auctoritate multorum codicum vindicantur. Corrumpi siquidem nequeunt, quae inspirante Domino dicta noscuntur, ut est: «Obliti non sumus te», et illud «Viri sanguinum et dolosi» – «Fabricatus est templum» et «Radetur caput suum» (...).

⁵³ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1.15.6: Et quoniam interdum casus generaue nominum vel temporum humanis regulis nequeunt convenire, sed tamen eorum usum ecclesiasticus consensus amplectitur, duorum vel trium priscorum emendatorumque codicum auctoritas inquiratur (...). On this passage see Weissengruber (1969, 202–203).

⁵⁴ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1.15.7: Regulas igitur elocutionum Latinorum, id est, quadrigam Messii, omnimodis non sequare, ubi tamen priscorum codicum auctoritate convinceris; expedit enim interdum praetermittere humanarum formulas dictionum, et divini magis eloquii custodire mensuram. (...) Istud enim inter humanas dictiones convenit praecaveri; in divinis autem eloquiis tales compositiones nullatenus accusantur. Maneat ubique incorrupta locutio quae Deo placuisse cognoscitur, ita ut fulgore suo niteat, non humano desiderio carpienda subiaceat. Haec enim et simplices suaviter instruit, et doctos pro sua reverentia decenter oblectat.

tributes come after the nominatives, while the prepositional ablative constructions precede them, thus altogether leading to a chiastic pattern. It is clear that Cassiodorus once again demonstrates his rhetorical prowess.

But this is not to say that style is more important to him than content. It is undeniable that he attempts to be as exhaustive as possible with his guidance, illustrating a wide range of linguistic and stylistic questions with helpful examples. This way, he is able to stress that his approach to the handling of biblical and theological writings does not subscribe to an extremely conservative non-interventionist attitude, although he does warn against making textual changes too quickly. Any such alterations, however, need to be based upon well-informed decisions and require real professionalism in all kinds of respects, but also the right disposition of the mind, venerating the supremacy of the holy scriptures. This is precisely what he aims to convey with the two books of his *Institutiones*.⁵⁵

As has already been indicated in Inst. 1.15, the reason for the primacy of the holy scriptures is to be situated in their delightful style and well-arranged words which captivate their readers. But equally important are their adherence to truth (*veritas*) and their didactic nature, instigating humans to live a morally impeccable life.⁵⁶ However, in order for them to be sufficiently effective, faith in God and devotion are indispensable prerequisites for anyone studying them; if these are missing, their divine words cannot reach their audience.⁵⁷

Towards the end of Book 1, Cassiodorus briefly tackles two areas that monks will also find relevant to their tasks: Cosmography will help them identify places mentioned in the holy writings (Inst. 1.25). Medicine will allow them to cure those suffering from illness, even though the definitive remedy will only come from God, not from human art (Inst. 1.31.1); nevertheless, Cassiodorus has accumulated Latin translations of Greek medical treatises for the library at Vivarium, in particular for those monks who do not know any Greek – a statement that is instructive for the history of medicine and for the development of ancient science and scholarship more generally.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Löwe (1948, 437) rightly speaks of Cassiodorus' «Methodik einer philologisch begründeten christlichen Wissenschaft». Taken together with other evidence, Inst. 1.15 can be used to back the assertion made by Haines-Eitzen (2000, 79): «Medieval scripture per se, found possibly as early as the fifth-century monasteries under the influence of Rufinus, operated according to a set of rules and guidelines, which included conventions of script, punctuation, and abbreviations, and provided careful monitoring and correcting of the work of scribes.» See also Haines-Eitzen (2000, 108), whose study is for the most part limited to the second and third centuries A.D. – a constraint that the author herself is ready to admit (2000, 132).

⁵⁶ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1.16.1: Intuemini, sodales egregii, quam mirabilis, quam dulcis in Scripturis divinis decurrit ordo dictorum, desiderium semper excrescens, satietas sine fine, esuries gloriosa beatorum, ubi nimietas non arguitur sed magis importunitas crebra laudatur – merito, quando et notitia rerum salutarium inde discitur, et credentibus atque eadem operantibus aeterna vita praestatur. Praeterita sine falsitate describunt, praesentia plus quam quod videntur ostendunt, futura quasi iam perfecta narrantur: ubique in eis veritas regnat, ubique divina virtus irradiat, ubique panduntur humano generi profutura.

⁵⁷ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1.16.2: Istas siquidem litteras non ratio humana repperit, sed hominibus sanctis virtus caelestis infudit; quas tunc bene datur intellegi, quando eas vera et utilia praedicare mens devota crediderit. Quid enim in illis litteris utilitatis et suavitatis non invenies, si purissimo lumine mentis intendas? Lectio cuncta virtutum est, verbum non inaniter cadens, nec tardat effectus quod promittit affatus, oboedientibus conferens aeternam salutem, superbis restituens perenne supplicium. See also Inst. 1.24.3.

⁵⁸ Cassiodorus, Inst. 1.31.2: Quod si vobis non fuerit Graecarum litterarum nota facundia, in primis habetis Herbarium Dioscoridis, qui herbas agrorum mirabili proprietate disseruit atque depinxit. Post haec legite Hippocratem atque Galienum Latina lingua conversos, id est, Therapeutica Galieni ad philosophum Glaucōnem destinatas, et anonymum quandam, qui ex diversis auctoribus probatur esse collectus. Deinde Caeli Aureli de Medicina et Hippocratis de Herbis et Curis diversosque alios medendi arte compositos, quos

4. *Language and culture in Book 2 of Cassiodorus' Institutiones*

The explanation of the purpose of Book 2 is anticipated in a short section of Book 1: The synopsis of the secular arts, whose usefulness is once again underlined, is to serve as a repetition for the more advanced and as a neat introduction for the less experienced (Inst. 1.271). At the end of the preface to Book 2, Cassiodorus spells out that the second part of his *Institutiones* serves as an introduction to each of the seven *artes liberales*, and that he has detailed the Greek and Latin specialists in each field to point those readers wishing to learn more in the right direction. It is thus clear that he cannot give the full picture in his own work.⁵⁹ The term *compendium* used here is noteworthy: In its literal meaning, it signifies a 'saving' leading to an advantage or profit, also with regard to work involved, or a 'shorter way or route' as the result of an abridgement.⁶⁰

As mentioned above, grammar is the first discipline discussed in Book 2, but despite its prominent position, Cassiodorus' treatment of it is very short.⁶¹ At the beginning of a mere three paragraphs, he offers an overview of its focus and objectives (Inst. 2.1.1):

Grammatica vero est peritia pulchre loquendi ex poetis illustribus auctoribusque collecta; officium eius est sine vitio dictionem prosalem metricamque componere; finis vero elimatae locutionis vel scripturae inculpabili placere peritia.

«Grammar is the skill of speaking stylishly gathered from famous poets and writers; its function is to compose prose and verse without fault; its purpose is to please by the impeccable skill of polished speech or writing.»

This definition articulates not only a clear demand for the awareness of linguistic correctness and literary authorities, but also the need to delight others through robust knowledge in the area of language and style. As Gemeinhardt has noticed, these are the areas that were among the targets of the Christian debate about the value of pagan literary and cultural ideals.⁶² Yet Cassiodorus' section on grammar does not dwell on these issues that caused lively controversies among other Christian writers.⁶³

vobis in bibliothecae nostrae sinibus reconditos Deo auxiliante dereliqui. On this passage, see Courcelle (1948, 382–388) and Viscido (1987, 39–41). On Cassiodorus' enthusiastic evaluation of medicine as a discipline, see Var. 6.19, assessed together with other passages by Meyer-Flügel (1992, 381–384). See also Heerklotz (1926, 41) and Riché (1995, 63–64).

⁵⁹ Cassiodorus, Inst. 2 praef. 5: Nec illud tacebimus, quibus auctoribus tam Graecis quam Latinis quae dicimus exposita claruerunt, ut qui studiose legere voluerint, quibusdam compendiis introducti lucidius maiorum dicta percipiant. See also Inst. 2.1.3 with regard to grammar: Haec breviter de definitionibus tantummodo dicta sufficiant. Ceterum qui ea voluerit latius pleniusque cognoscere, cum praefatione sua codicem legat, quem de grammatica feci arte conscribi, quatenus diligens lector invenire possit, quod illi proposito deputatum esse cognoscit.

⁶⁰ These are the meanings given by Karl Ernst Georges, Ausführliches lateinisch-deutsches Handwörterbuch (vol. 1), Hannover 1913 (repr. Darmstadt 1995), 1343 (s.v. *compendium*): «Ersparnis als Gewinn, Vorteil, Profit», «Ersparnis als Abkürzung der Zeit, Arbeit», and «der abgekürzte Weg, kürzere Weg».

⁶¹ The situation is very different in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* where grammar gets considerably more space than any other of the seven *artes* – almost three times as much as rhetoric or dialectic. See also Curtius (1973, 52).

⁶² See Gemeinhardt (2007, 398): «Hier sind die entscheidenden Elemente des antiken Grammatikunterrichts versammelt: die klassischen Vorbilder, das Kriterium der Fehlerlosigkeit und das Ziel, mit den erworbenen Fähigkeiten zu glänzen, worauf sich die christliche Kritik richtete (...).» There is a vast amount of secondary literature on the inconsistent attitudes of Christian authors towards the value of pagan culture and

Among his sources for the treatment of grammar, he singles out Donatus who has a reputation for being particularly suitable for beginners. Cassiodorus had equipped the library at Vivarium with this grammarian's *Ars minor* and *Ars maior* so that his monks had easy access to these manuals, and it is perhaps for that reason that he decided to keep his own chapter on this discipline reasonably condensed.⁶⁴ It is from Donatus' *Ars maior* that he then compiles basic definitions of the *vox articulata*, the letter, syllable, metrical feet, accents, punctuation, the eight parts of speech, rhetorical figures, etymologies and orthography (Inst. 2.1.2–3). The only part that receives slightly more attention here is the system of the parts of speech with its *accidentia*.

Although the ensuing chapter on rhetoric (Inst. 2.2) is much longer than the one on grammar, Cassiodorus explains that his discussion is still selective, as one would expect from his earlier programmatic statements.⁶⁵ He takes up the traditional definition of the orator as a morally irreproachable man whose task it is to speak convincingly on public matters.⁶⁶ As his sources he identifies Cicero's *De inventione*, Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, the later commentaries by Marius Victorinus, and Gaius Chirius Fortunatianus' *Ars rhetorica*, which are all available in the library at Vivarium (Inst. 2.2.10). Fortunatianus' treatise is warmly recommended to those who are in search of a user-friendly and succinct overview which is perceptive and intelligent despite its brevity.⁶⁷ This sort of advice once again suggests that there was a group among Cassiodorus' monks who would have welcomed such a less demanding auxiliary.⁶⁸ He briefly goes through the five parts of rhetoric (*inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria* and *pronuntiatio*), its three main genres (*genus demonstrativum*, *deliberativum* and *iudiciale*), the status theory, the six parts of a speech (*exordium*, *narratio*, *partitio*, *confirmatio*, *reprehensio* and *conclusio*), the principles of argumentation as well as various other issues.

learning. See e.g. Ellspermann (1949), Laistner (1957, esp. 44–53), Krause (1958), Laistner (1967, 49–73), Hagendahl (1958), Johann (1976, 487–572), Hagendahl (1983), Englisch (1994, 41–51), and Gemeinhardt (2007), who also provides a useful synopsis of the scholarship of the past sixty years (2007, 11–20). See also Courcelle (1948), Piepenbrink (2010, 45–49, 104–106), and Denecker (2015, 19–20, 348–349), with further references.

⁶³ See in particular Gemeinhardt (2007, esp. 397–417), further Kaster (1988, 75–90, esp. 83–88).

⁶⁴ Cassiodorus, Inst. 2.1.1: Sed quamvis auctores temporum superiorum de arte grammatica ordine diverso tractaverint, suisque saeculis honoris decus habuerint, ut Palaemon, Phocas, Probus et Censorinus, nobis tamen placet in medium Donatum deducere, qui et pueris specialiter aptus et tyronibus probatur accommodus; cuius gemina commenta reliquimus, ut supra quod ipse planus est, fiat clarius dupliciter explanatus.

⁶⁵ Cassiodorus, Inst. 2.2.1: Unde nunc aliqua *breuiter* assumemus, ut nonnullis partibus indicatis paene totius artis ipsius summam virtutemque intellegere debeamus. See also Inst. 2.3.22 on arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy: Quocirca tempus est ut de eis singillatim ac *breuiter* disserere debeamus.

⁶⁶ Cassiodorus, Inst. 2.2.1: Orator igitur est vir bonus dicendi peritus, ut dictum est, in civilibus quaestionibus. Oratoris autem officium est apposite dicere ad persuadendum. Quintilian is explicitly connected to the ideal of the *vir bonus* in Inst. 2.2.10. On Cicero's and Quintilian's postulate of the ethical integrity of the orator, see Fögen (2000, 151–152), with further references.

⁶⁷ Cassiodorus, Inst. 2.2.10: Fortunatianum vero, doctorem novellum, qui tribus voluminibus de hac re subtiliter minuteque tractavit, in pugillari codice apte forsitan congruenterque redegimus, ut et fastidium lectori tollat et quae sunt necessaria competenter insinuet. Hunc legat qui brevitatis amator est. Nam cum opus suum in multos libros non tetenderit, plurima tamen acutissima ratiocinatione disseruit.

⁶⁸ See also Inst. 2.73 on Ptolemy's canones: Is etiam canones, quibus cursus astrorum inveniuntur, instituit, ex quibus, ut mihi videtur, climata forsitan nosse, horarum spatia comprehendere, lunae cursum pro inquisitione paschali, solis eclipsin, ne simplices aliqua confusione turbentur, qua ratione fiant advertere non videtur absurdum.

While Cassiodorus' overall attitude towards this discipline is quite positive, he makes rather little effort to create a clearly discernible link between pagan rhetoric and the theological world where persuasion certainly also carried a great deal of weight. However, towards the end of this chapter, he does admit that certain areas of this discipline might be useful to monks (Inst. 2.2.16):

Memoratus autem Fortunatianus in tertio libro meminit de oratoris memoria, de pronuntiatione et voce, unde tamen monachus cum aliqua utilitate discedit, quando ad suas partes non improbe videtur attrahere, quod illi ad exercendas controversias utiliter aptaverunt.

«Fortunatianus, who was previously mentioned, in his third book discusses the orator's memory, delivery, and vocal quality. A monk derives from this book, however, a certain profit, when he is seen to appropriate for his task, without reproach, the techniques that they developed to suit their debates.»

Memorisation, performance and voice are, of course, to be trained on the basis of the biblical text – a method which will warrant that those engaged in the mission of God will not be led astray by the teachings of a secular art.⁶⁹ The rather controlled approach taken here must be interpreted as a sign of Cassiodorus' eventual reservation towards pagan rhetoric. But such a detachment can also be glimpsed in the case of other disciplines, parts of which may entail a certain risk or even danger for those versed in them, as they may adversely affect their religious conviction.⁷⁰

Cassiodorus acknowledges that rhetoric and dialectic are interrelated (Inst. 2.3.2), but nonetheless, dialectic occupies more space in Book 2 than any other subject – almost twice as much as rhetoric.⁷¹ He uses the chapter on dialectic as an opportunity for a more general outline of the discipline of philosophy and its branches (Inst. 2.3.3–7). Moreover, he is interested in categories, syllogisms, definitions and arguments, basing his exposition on Aristotle, Porphyry and various other authors, including the Latin translations of their works which Cassiodorus joined into one codex (Inst. 2.3.8–18). However, most of this falls under the category of language philosophy rather than linguistics, even the passage on noun, verb, sentence and types of utterances taken from Aristotle's *De interpretatione*.⁷²

⁶⁹ Cassiodorus, Inst. 2.2.16: *Memoriam siquidem lectionis divinae recognita cautela servabit, cum in supradicto libro eius vim qualitatemque cognoverit. Artem vero pronuntiationis in divinae legis effatione concipiet. Vocis autem diligentiam in psalmodiae cantatione custodit. Sic instructus in opere sancto redditur, quamvis aliquantulum libris saecularibus occupetur.*

⁷⁰ See Cassiodorus, Inst. 2.7.4 on astronomical knowledge: (...) *Dedit enim Dominus unicuique creaturae suae aliquam virtutem, quam tamen innoxie de propria qualitate noscamus. Cetera vero quae se ad cognitionem siderum coniungunt, id est, ad notitiam factorum, et fidei nostrae sine dubitatione contraria sunt, sic ignorari debent, ut nec scripta esse videantur.* In the same paragraph, he even quotes Augustine to buttress this view. See also Inst. 2 concl. 2, reinforced by two biblical passages.

⁷¹ For a brief summary of the role of dialectic in Cassiodorus' *Institutiones*, see e.g. Della Corte (1986, 35–38).

⁷² Cassiodorus, Inst. 2.3.11: *Nomen est significativa secundum placitum sine tempore, cuius nulla pars est significativa separata, ut Socrates. Verbum est quod consignificat tempus, cuius pars nihil extra significat, et est semper eorum quae de altero dicuntur nota, ut cogitat, disputat. Oratio est vox significativa, cuius partium aliquid separatum significativum est, ut Socrates disputat. Enuntiatio oratio est vox significativa de eo quod est aliquid vel non est, ut Socrates est, Socrates non est. Affirmatio est enuntiatio alicuius de aliquo, ut Socrates est, negatio est alicuius ab aliquo, ut Socrates non est. Contradictio est affirmationis et negationis oppositio, ut Socrates disputat, Socrates non disputat.*

The four other *artes* arithmetic (Inst. 2.4), music (Inst. 2.5), geometry (Inst. 2.6) and astronomy (Inst. 2.7) constitute sub-disciplines of mathematics, as Cassiodorus explains himself (Inst. 2.3.21).⁷³ He trivialises their substance when he invokes the Church Fathers who anchored their benefit in the distraction from carnal desires.⁷⁴ At any rate, none of the four chapters on these subjects contains any explicit remarks on language or linguistics proper and can thus be bypassed in this paper. The only exception may be the very general and extremely short section on rhythm and metre in Inst. 2.5.5.

5. Conclusion

Although Cassiodorus' *Institutiones* are not exactly a very uniform text, it is obvious that language and style are topics which permeate the entire work. Special attention is given to the role of foreign languages as opposed to Latin and, as a result, to aspects of translation. Repeatedly, Cassiodorus extols accomplished translators such as Jerome and Dionysius Exiguus. He thus values a thorough knowledge of Greek and Hebrew – in particular for the purposes of a community such as the monks at Vivarium. However, it should be noted that there are also passages in his other works where he shows a more general appreciation for competence in foreign languages. In the *Variae*,⁷⁵ Cyprian, appointed as Theoderic's Count of the Sacred Largesses in A.D. 524, is commended for his command of Latin, Greek and Gothic, which are taken to be a sign of his culture and sophistication (Var. 5.40.5). Theoderic's daughter Amalaswintha, who succeeded her father as the ruler of the Ostrogoth Empire, is praised for very similar linguistic skills, which in her case enormously facilitate the duties connected to her political function, such as negotiations with representatives of foreign countries with whom she interacts in a most professional manner even without an interpreter (Var. 11.1.6–8).⁷⁶ Boethius' qualities as a translator, scholar and mediator between the Greek and Roman worlds of learning are accentuated in a highly panegyric letter (Var. 1.45), and these assets are said to have reached such high standards that anyone

⁷³ On the *quadrivium* in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, see e.g. Englisch (1994), who has several sections on Cassiodorus (1994, 58–67, 108–126, 160–170, 209–228). However, for several reasons (see Englisch 1994, 12), she leaves aside music. Specifically on arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy in Cassiodorus' *Institutiones*, see Pizzani (1986).

⁷⁴ Cassiodorus, Inst. 2.3.22: Quas merito sancti Patres nostri legendas studiosissimis persuadent, quoniam ex magna parte per eas a carnalibus rebus appetitus noster abstrahitur, et faciunt desiderare quae, praestante Domino, solo possumus corde conspiciere.

⁷⁵ On the *Variae*, see the most recent studies by Kakridi (2005), Giardina (2006), and Bjornlie (2013); see also Heerklotz (1926), Bardy (1945, 398–401), van den Besselaar (1950, 107–133), van den Besselaar (1960, 34–41), O'Donnell (1979, 55–102), Viscido (1987, esp. 15–24), Macpherson (1989, esp. 149–203), Barnish (1992), Meyer-Flügel (1992, 42–51 and passim), Janus / Dinzelbacher (2010, esp. 28–34), and Bjornlie (2015). On the title of the work, explained by Cassiodorus in the final section of his first preface (Var. praef. 15–18), see e.g. Löwe (1948, 432), O'Donnell (1979, 73–74), and Bjornlie (2015, 292–293).

⁷⁶ On Cassiodorus and Amalaswintha, see van den Besselaar (1950, 92–98), Krautschick (1983, 122–147, 150–155, 161–184), Macpherson (1989, 218–224), Meyer-Flügel (1992, 167–170), Caruso (1998, 82–83, 139–153), and Denecker (2015, 177–178), with further literature. On the panegyric character of Var. 11.1, see Romano (1978, 24–25, 32–35), who speaks of «un vero e proprio panegirico per Amalasunta» (1978, 24). On the etymology of her name, see Falcone (1993, 237, 272).

would prefer his Latin renderings over the Greek originals (Var. 1.45.4).⁷⁷ For Cassiodorus, the mastery of foreign languages is thus not just a matter of usefulness which can be relied upon for practical purposes such as the translation of biblical texts or scholarly literature; it also carries a clear symbolic weight, and may indicate eminent intellectual and cultural status as well as political power.⁷⁸ At the same time, it cannot be denied that his *Institutiones* reveal next to nothing about the actual methods of translation used by the scholars that he mentions. This may be due to the fact that such considerations which can be found in many other late antique authors would have gone beyond the scope of his work, and beyond the interests and needs of the majority of his target readership.⁷⁹ It has also been propounded that his unmistakable admiration for translators is the result of his limited facility with Greek (see O'Donnell 1979, 143), but there is in fact relatively little conclusive evidence for this purported inadequacy.⁸⁰

Further topics that Cassiodorus thematises in his treatise are textual criticism, orthography, punctuation and appropriate style. Closely connected to these areas is his interest in linguistic norms which he applies for the correct constitution of the biblical text. However, his discussions are geared towards the needs of his readers who are engaged in the study of the holy scriptures.⁸¹ What is particularly intriguing in this context is the ethical component of his reflexions on language: The biblical text is not only aesthetically pleasing, but also morally superior. Education, including the attainment of linguistic competence, is centred around the orthodox exegesis of the word of God as well as the salvation of the soul of anyone reading the Bible.

Cassiodorus certainly recognises the benefits of pagan learning, but at the same time instrumentalises it for other – in his view higher – goals. As Hadot (2005, 191) has put it with regard to his work, «les arts libéraux et les disciplines profanes n'ont de valeur que dans la mesure où ils peuvent aider à comprendre la Bible; ils deviennent des sciences auxiliaires de l'exégèse» (similarly Hadot 2005, 406). Cassiodorus returns to the theory that the secular disciplines have their origin in the Bible, and he does so in the *Institutiones* as well as in his commentary on the Psalms where he argues that all rhetorical figures, definitions and arguments are derived from the Psalms.⁸² In his *Institutiones*, a certain uneasiness about the

⁷⁷ On Var. 1.45 see van den Besselaar (1950, 122–124) and Stahl (1962, 196–197), both of whom also discuss Var. 1.10.

⁷⁸ See also Garzya (1986, 119): «Per lui (sc. Cassiodoro) la conoscenza della lingua greca è già di per sé segno di alta distinzione (...).»

⁷⁹ For late antique testimonies on the principles and purposes of translation, see in particular Marti (1974), further Courcelle (1948, *passim*), Bardy (1948, esp. 100–111, 231–289), Mülke (2008, 109–201, 284–288), and Denecker (2015, 149–158, 293–295), who also has a chapter on appraisals and uses of multilingual competence (Denecker 2015, 142–180). See also the short overview in Winkelmann (1967).

⁸⁰ For details, see the nuanced picture drawn by Courcelle (1948, esp. 319–326, 339–341, 342, 392–394, 399–400). See also van den Besselaar (1950, 227–228), McGuire (1959, 18–20, 24), Garzya (1986, 120–127), and Barnish (1989, 185).

⁸¹ See Mynors (1963, ix): «There are no signs that he (sc. Cassiodorus) thought of a wider public than his own brethren (...).»

⁸² See Helm (1954, 920–921), Ludwig (1967, 153), Curtius (1973, 51), O'Donnell (1979, 158–159, 162), Marin (1986, 444–445), Fuhrmann (1994, 339–340), Bürgens (2003 [vol. 1], 38–43), Pollmann (2004, 291–294, 301–304), Hadot (2005, 191 n. 2), and Pronay (2014, 193–195). For Auerbach (1958, 39), Cassiodorus is «im Westen vielleicht der konsequenteste Vertreter des Gedankens vom Ursprung der Beredsamkeit (und aller Weisheit) aus der Bibel (...).» Specifically on Cassiodorus' commentary on the Psalms, see Ludwig (1967, 164), Hagendahl (1983, 112), and Jenal (2005, 232), who all provide precise references to relevant passages.

idiosyncratic style of the Bible is still noticeable (at least implicitly), but it is nonetheless combined with Cassiodorus' conviction that the holy writings do have a great deal to offer even in terms of style, and that also applies to Christian theological works. He repeatedly applauds Christian authors for their eloquence – a phenomenon which was not unusual among educated Christians in late antiquity, despite widespread criticism of traditional rhetoric (see Gemeinhardt 2007, 417–448, esp. 442–448). As shown above, the *Institutiones* themselves are a work that is not without stylistic virtuosity. As a technical handbook, it is naturally rather different from the often lofty tone of the *Variae*,⁸³ but its style is not without moments of brilliance, apposite enough to testify to Cassiodorus' imposing rhetorical skills which he employs to commend himself as an erudite and trustworthy professional in matters related to language. He thus stylises himself as an exemplar for his monks, and for any Christian scholar, to be emulated by them.

Although Vivarium was by no means the first or the only community where pagan scholarship and Christian learning formed a synthesis, Cassiodorus' *Institutiones* had a wideranging impact on later periods.⁸⁴ As Curtius (1973, 446) has pointed out:

«Cassiodors Werk verbreitete sich bald weit über die Grenzen des engen Benutzerkreises hinaus, für den es geschrieben war. Es wurde ein Grundbuch der mittelalterlichen Bildung.»

Whether this was something that Cassiodorus himself foresaw for his treatise is difficult to say. But despite the limitations of his work, he produced a manual from which future generations would still profit. It was an outcome against which he, as most other authors, would have been unlikely to object.⁸⁵

On the conceptual precursors, see Ellspermann (1949, 25–28, 113–116, 124–125, 176, 218), Krause (1958, 67–68, 87, 91, 123, 159, 278 n. 31), and Fuhrmann (1994, 340): «Das die Bibel an den Anfang stellende Derivationsschema ging vor allem auf Philon von Alexandrien zurück, der es für das Verhältnis der Gesetzgebung Mose zur griechischen Philosophie nutzbar gemacht hatte; von ihm übernahmen die christlichen Apologeten, Justinus Martyr, Klemens von Alexandrien u.a., das Motiv, und es fand von dort aus in der ganzen Patristik Widerhall. Cassiodor beruft sich auf Augustin, der sich in der *Doctrina christiana* ebenfalls zu dieser Theorie bekannt hatte.» Two particularly revealing passages in Augustine are *De doct. chr.* 2.43 and *De civ.* 8.11, the latter of which begins with the following sentence: *Mirantur autem quidam nobis in Christi gratia sociati, cum audiunt vel legunt Platonem de Deo ista sensisse quae multum congruere veritati nostrae religionis agnoscunt.*

⁸³ Most of the studies listed in n. 75 (above) also deal with the language and style of the *Variae*. Additional secondary literature on these issues is given, for example, in Viscido (1987, 20 n. 13).

⁸⁴ See Fuhrmann (1994, 333): «Cassiodor (...) kann als der Gelehrte, der Polyhistor, der Enzyklopädist der Epoche gelten; er war zugleich Büchersammler und Bibliothekar und hat wie wenige andere der im Mittelalter herrschenden Form der Wissensvermittlung, der Klosterschule, den Weg bereitet.» See also O'Donnell (1979, 185) and Hagendahl (1983, 10, 111–112). For a more detailed overview of the *Nachleben* of the *Institutiones*, see e.g. Jenal (2005, 236–244), Halporn / Vessey (2004, 79–97), van den Besselaar (1950, 252–263), Lehmann (1959, 56–108), Stahl (1962, 212–220, 234–235, 242), O'Donnell (1979, esp. 244–245), Della Corte (1986, 43–47), Fontaine (1986), Caruso (1998, 287–315), Ribémont (2001, *passim*), and Hafner (2002, esp. 79–86). On the manuscript tradition see van de Vyver (1941, 59–76), Mynors (1963, ix–xlix), and Holtz (1986).

⁸⁵ Various drafts of this paper were presented at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (September 2015), the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (October 2015), Universiteit Leiden (February 2016), Università degli Studi di Torino (May 2016), and Univerzita Palackého in Olomouc (July 2016). I would like to thank the audiences for their constructive feedback. The final version was prepared in the unique atmosphere of the «Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study» (NIAS) in Wassenaar where I held a Senior Research Fellowship from September 2015 until June 2016. I am extremely grateful to NIAS staff for their invaluable assistance, in particular to Dindy van Maanen and Erwin Nolet who very kindly got hold of a whole series of books and articles for me.

Appendix: Cassiodorus' praise of grammar (Var. 9.21.3–5)

(Text from Mommsen 1894, translation from Barnish 1992)

(3) Prima enim grammaticorum schola est fundamentum pulcherrimum litterarum, mater gloriosa facundiae, quae cogitare novit ad laudem, loqui sine vitio. haec in cursu orationis sic errorem cognoscit absonum, quemadmodum boni mores crimen detestantur externum. nam sicut musicus consonantibus choris efficit dulcissimum melos, ita dispositis congruenter accentibus metrum novit decantare grammaticus.

(4) Grammatica magistra verborum, ornatrix humani generis, quae per exercitationem pulcherrimae lectionis antiquorum nos cognoscitur iuvare consiliis. haec non utuntur barbari reges: apud legales dominos maere cognoscitur singularis. arma enim et reliqua gentes habent: sola reperitur eloquentia, quae Romanorum dominis obsecundat. hinc oratorum pugna civilis iuris classicum canit: hinc cunctos proceres nobilissima disertitudo commendat et ut reliqua taceamus, hoc quod loquimur inde est.

(5) Qua de re, patres conscripti, hanc vobis curam, hanc auctoritatem propitia divinitate largimur, ut successor scholae liberalium litterarum tam grammaticus quam orator nec non et iuris expositor commoda sui decessoris ab eis quorum interest sine aliqua imminutione percipiat et semel primi ordinis vestri ac reliqui senatus amplissimi auctoritate firmatus, donec suscepti operis idoneus reperitur, neque de transferendis neque de imminuendis anonis a quolibet patiatur improbam quaestionem, sed vobis ordinantibus atque custodientibus emolumentorum suorum securitate potiatur, praefecto urbis nihilominus constituta servante.

King Athalaric to the Senate of the City of Rome (A.D. 533)

(3) For the school of grammar has primacy: it is the fairest foundation of learning, the glorious mother of eloquence, which has learnt to aim at praise, to speak without a fault. As good morals view an alien crime, so it views a dissonant error in the course of declamation. For, as the musician creates the sweetest song from a choir in harmony, so, by well-ordered modulations of sound, the grammarian can recite in metre.

(4) Grammar is the mistress of words, the embellisher of the human race; through the practice of the noble reading of ancient authors, she helps us, we know, by her counsels. The barbarian kings do not use her; as is well known, she remains unique to lawful rulers. For the tribes possess arms and the rest; rhetoric is found in sole obedience to the lords of the Romans. Thence the battle of the orators sounds the war-call of civil law; thence noble eloquence recommends all leading men; and thence, to say no more, my present words derive.

(5) Therefore, fathers of the Senate, with God's approval, I enjoin on you this duty, this authority: a succeeding professor in the school of liberal studies, whether the grammarian, the rhetorician, or the teacher of law, shall receive from those responsible, without any diminution, the income of his predecessor. And, once confirmed by the authority of your chief order and the rest of the most noble Senate, so long as he is found fit for the work he has undertaken, he must suffer no man's improper challenge involving either the transfer or the reduction of his salary; but, under your ordinance and protection, he is to enjoy his emoluments in security. The Urban Prefect, too, is to maintain these lawful rights.

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